

November/December 2002

**n
o
v
a**

The Avon HG & PG Club Magazine

Avon HGPG Club Committee Contacts

Name	Job	Home Phone	Work Phone	Mobile Phone	E-Mail
Tim Pentreath	Chairman	01225 832922	01761 234708	07905 271114	Chairman@avonhgpg.co.uk
Alex Coltman	Safety Officer	01179 258405			Safety@avonhgpg.co.uk
Robin Brown	Sites Officer (N)	01453 827202		0973 844449	Sitesnorth@avonhgpg.co.uk
Stafford Evans	Sites Officer Overall	01225 404063		07748 145712	Sites@avonhgpg.co.uk
Tony Moore	Membership Secretary HG Low Air Time	01980 594455	02380 316569	07818 000987	membership@avonhgpg.co.uk Hgla@avonhgpg.co.uk
Cathy Lawrence	Nova Editor	01985 214579		07799 776260	nova@avonhgpg.co.uk or editor@avonhgpg.co.uk
Hamish Atkinson	Webmaster	01380 723844	0800 195 9861	07970 504408	Webmaster@avonhgpg.co.uk , News@avonhgpg.co.uk or Gallery@avonhgpg.co.uk
Paul Ellis	Treasurer			07966 371535	
Garry Mitchell	Librarian	01373 472242		0780 1179917	Library@avonhgpg.co.uk
Rich Harding	PG Low Air Time	0117 971 9380		0966 491138	Pgla@avonhgpg.co.uk
Neil Atkinson	HG Competitions	01264 323813	01476 457240	0771 4159356	Hgcomps@avonhgpg.co.uk
Martin Stanton	PG Competitions	01761 451323		0773 4590757	Pgcomps@avonhgpg.co.uk

Club Meetings

Club meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at the Compass Inn at Tormarton (just off the A46 about ¼ mile north of junction 18 on the M4). Arrive at 8pm for an 8.30pm start. For further details please contact Tim Pentreath.

There will not be a December meeting as we will all be getting together at the Christmas Dinner. There is no meeting in January. The next meeting is on February 6th when Rich Harding will be organising another "Question Time".

NOVA is the newsletter of the Avon Hang-gliding and Paragliding Club. The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, or Committee of the Club.

NOVA can also be found online at www.avonhgpg.co.uk

*Send your articles to the Editor, Cathy Lawrence, at
112 Prestbury Drive, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9LE Tel: 01985 214 579
Email: editor@avonhgpg.co.uk or nova@avonhgpg.co.uk*

Cover shot – Late afternoon at Mere by Cathy Lawrence

Editorial



I thought this was going to be a smaller than usual issue of Nova until a few days ago when at the last minute my inbox started filling up with suggestions and contributions. This has coincided with me now being able to type with my right hand as well as my left - excellent physiotherapy. However it may be a while before I can join Marcus when Bob Drury shouts "Put your hands up in the air!". If you are wondering what I am talking about then you obviously haven't read Marcus's excellent feature about his epic flight over the Ecrins in Cross Country magazine. Not to worry though because he has written an even more detailed account of his awesome experience especially for this edition of Nova. This issue also sees the start of a series of mini-features about flying holiday resorts - please tell me what you think of the places you've visited to help others choose the most appropriate place for their experience and aspirations. Now I better sign off and leave plenty of room for Tim, our new Chairman's, waffle.

Cathy Lawrence

Chairman's Waffle

I'm writing this on a Sunday evening after an extremely wet half-term week - it's hard to believe that people were still flying XCs only a few weeks ago. And at this point of the year spring seems such a very long way off. I guess it gives us all time to reflect on the highs and lows of the year gone by and to redress the imbalance in our lives that flying inevitably causes. For me at least it's a time to do more with my family, although it would also be nice to finish off the downstairs bathroom that I started redecorating before Easter!



The club has had some notable highs this year: the Mere Bash was again an outstanding success - thanks to all those who helped, Simon especially for his role in pulling the whole event together. Only one thing would make it better next year, and that's YOU - we need more of you to come and enjoy what's always a fantastic weekend. We've also had good results in the British Clubs Challenge with many pilots flying personal bests in the various HG and PG rounds. Avon pilots have also done well in the British Paragliding Cup, most notably Alex Coltman (2nd overall) and Jo Eades (6th overall and top woman). In the British Paragliding Championship, Avon pilots Chris Harland (12th overall) and Fiona Macaskill (18th overall and top woman) did particularly well. In the paragliding XC league we've had our best ever year - 1983 km flown by 22 pilots, 8 of whom being new to XC flying. There are too many excellent flights to mention - visit www.avonpgxc.co.uk for details of them all!

However all of these highs were overshadowed by the tragic death of Dave Yeandle who was killed in a paragliding accident whilst on holiday in Spain back in April. Dave was a well-liked member of the club, and is greatly missed by all those who knew him. Our thoughts go out to his family as we come up to Christmas...

On the hang-gliding front, we don't have many pilots who take part in competitions, but there has been one pilot who has stood out above the rest - Nev Almond, who flies an Eclipse rigid wing. Most notable was his 234km flight from Frocester to Ipswich on 24th June - he only landed because he ran out of map! You only get to hear about Nev's flights through the grapevine, he's too modest to talk about them himself!

I am always hearing that the Avon Club has something going for it that many other clubs do not, whether it's our friendliness, enthusiasm or whatever. One of my aims as Chairman over the next year will be to enhance our enviable reputation. This reputation doesn't just happen alone, it's largely down to the efforts of a core group of people who put as much, if not more, back into the sport as they get out of it - thank you to you all, you know who you are.

This year we're changing the venue for the Christmas Dinner and I'd like to take this opportunity to invite you (and your partners) to the Rockery in Combe Down, Bath, on Friday 13th December. Instead of the usual turkey and trimmings we will have a selection of curries to suit all tastes (There will also be veggie and non-curry alternatives, so there's no excuse not to come if you don't like curries!). We've got a disco arranged, and as we've got the place to ourselves I'm sure we'll be able to let our hair down! As in previous years there'll be a prize for the best dressed pilot, and also for the best hat, so get creative! Tickets will be £15 per person, and depending on numbers we might even be able to subsidise the drinks! So come on, don't be shy, get on down! I look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible. Anyway, enjoy the rest of this issue of Nova, enjoy the Christmas party, and above all enjoy your flying!

Tim Pentreath

News

Pandy Latest

Mrs Clayton's farm at Pandy, was sold at auction on October 3rd to an unknown couple from the London area. We will not be able to discuss parking at the farm until the new owners move in. Any further information will be passed on as soon as we get it. Mrs Clayton moved out into temporary rented accommodation at the end of October.

New Committee 2002/2003

After the AGM in October there have been a few committee position changes:

Chairman	Tim Pentreath (was Simon Kerr)
HG LAT	Tony Moore (was John Jones)
PG Comps Taylor)	Martin Stanton (was Pete)
Social Sec Pentreath)	UNFILLED (was Tim)
Librarian Macaskill)	Garry Mitchell (was Fiona)

A big thanks to Simon, John, Pete and Fiona for all the work that they've done over the last year or two. Thanks again to Simon as he has offered to carry on the role of Mere Bash organiser in 2003. Also thanks to the rest of the committee who are remaining in their posts for another year, and to Martin and Garry for letting themselves be press ganged onto the committee - it's not that bad, honest! The position of Social Secretary is still unfilled awaiting an enthusiastic volunteer. If you want to get more involved in the club and you are a good organiser then let us know.

PG Comps



I have been flying paragliders for nearly seven years now, and I am still as addicted as ever. I fly a Blue and White Swing and my flying suit is bright red, so you shouldn't have to many problems spotting on the hill, if you don't know me already. I am married to Amy, another keen pilot, and you will usually find us

on the hill with our young daughter Zoe. Looking forward to another year's epic flying over the coming season. Fly Free.

Martin Stanton

Nova November 2002

Librarian



Many of you will already know me, but for those who don't I am the grim looking bald convict type. I am usually found in varying states of disarray either dangling under or being dragged by my Flying Planet Whisper (the one with businessauctions.com on the

bottom and yellow repair tape on the top) . I live in Frome and fly mainly at Westbury and Mere as well as SE Wales. I am a club coach so if you do see me then please say Hi, I haven't bitten anybody for several years, honestly.

Within my role as club Librarian I have taken a stock check and find many videos and some books are unaccounted for. I am sure that many have been accidentally forgotten and dropped behind the sofa with all the other things that you need but just can't find. So before you next go to a club meeting I would be very grateful if you could have one last look for anything that may belong to the club and return it. Last year the club spent around £600.00 on books and videos. This is a considerable amount of Your Money to be left under somebody's sofa or behind the TV. At present we have a self sign system for books and videos and I hope that this system will continue to be sufficient as the next step will be to regulate the availability of items from the Library. *After all its your Library, Your money, and your friends . So please borrow and bring back.*

If anyone has read any good books or seen a good video that you feel the rest of the club members might enjoy then please contact me on:

Tel: 01373 472242

Mob: 0780 1179917

www.TRSSonemasons.co.uk

Garry Mitchell

2002 Hang-Gliding Statistics

Avon were 5th (out of 27) in the national club hang-gliding XC league.

The longest foot launched flight in the UK this year was by Nev Almond, flying from Frocester to Ipswich, 234km, on 24th June.

Donation to the Wessex Club

The club has offered the Wessex Club £500 towards their intended purchase of Bell Hill and have asked for Avon members to have reciprocal rights to fly the site. Previously the club has donated £1000 towards the purchase of the Bloreng and £500 for Long Mynd.

Christmas Dinner & Annual Awards

The annual prize-giving awards will take place at the Christmas Dinner which is being held on 13th December at the Rockery. You should have received your ticket inside this edition of Nova.

This year we intend to keep the awards very brief so you have more time for partying! The award categories are: PG awards: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Longest,

Longest DHV1/2 flight, Best newcomer to the league, Most improved pilot, The Dave Yeandle Cup, HG awards (categories still being decided on), Macaskill Cup (tree Landing), Best Article in Nova, and the Photo Competition.



As usual there will be a prize for the best fancy hat and the best dressed pilot. Just to get you in the spirit here's some photos of some of last years entries.

FOR SALE

Mac Eden 24 (69-90kg), Acpul STD, v. good condition, blue £350
Tel: 00 33 493 599 381 Email: charlie@skytribe.co.uk

Windtech Isis Small, Turquoise & white, Excellent first wing, Only 50 hours. £600
Tel: 01275 542178 (evenings) Email: christine.carter@ubht.swest.nhs.uk

Firebird Flame Medium (80-100kg), Still crispy, Excellent XC machine. £400
Tel: 01373 303481 Email: brent@pullen.f9.co.uk

Falhawk Atoll Large, Basic harness and helmet. Any offers
Tel: 0117 923 2622 Email: iamjpb@aol.com

If you are looking to buy or sell a used glider or equipment then check out the SkyAds link on the club website www.avonhgpg.co.uk. To advertise in Nova club members should phone Cathy on 01985 214 579 or email nova@avonhgpg.co.uk

Stairway to Heaven

Marcus King recalls his 100km+ flight over the Ecrins



PHOTO BY MARCUS KING

Crackle, the radio burst to life, "Put your hands up in the air, put your hands up in the air" not advice for a pilot falling from the sky but a fat boy slim inspired shout for joy. Turn my head, mouth grinning from ear to ear, respond with a holler, and in we go.

The cliff wraps it's arms around us and the warm air carries us to the waiting cloud. From here on it's rock and ice as far as I can see. Tension grips me, but isn't this what we've come here for. Isn't this the chance we've strived for. No going back, no regrets, a job to do so I have a story to tell.

A few weeks ago I had an email conversation with Rich Harding, following his excellent 85km flight. I had said how I was a bit frustrated at not making any big XCs whilst I had been in France. I had done several flights between 30 and 50 km but the big one had eluded me, and I really wanted to break the 100km barrier. This is the story of how I finally managed to achieve this goal.

Bob Drury and myself decided we needed to get out and do some real flying. He had had a frustrating time on his course,

and I had spent far too much time in the office. Initial plans were to explore the Vercours and possibly head over to the Ecrins for some proper mountain flying. As with plans like these things worked out differently... Bob had stopped in at Laragne the previous week and

met up with David and Rachael who run AllezUp.com (a gite catering for flyers and anyone else who wants a break in the French south). He arranged for us to call in there and stay a couple of days. We left Capières for the drive North arriving at

their place at midnight, where we were welcomed with cold beers. We decided a plan for the next day was in order, and opted for Orcierres Merlotte, a ski resort in a valley on the SW side of the Ecrins.

The next day five of us set off picking up Crispin Waddy, a friend of Bob's, on the way. David's 4-wheel drive took us easily to launch, a grassy slope on the side of the valley giving access to the big mountains behind. Getting the kit ready I soon discovered that I had mislaid my helmet and my gloves

which I keep in it (I later discovered them in my car back in Cipieres). I couldn't do anything about the helmet but I scrounged some socks and Bob's outer mitts and found one spare glove for my left hand. We briefed a possible route heading round the NE side of the mountains before returning.

the North but the south faces were firing air upwards. I took off the sock to try and take some photos of the others, but during my struggle to get it and outer mitt back on I lost the lift and got flushed. I fell away from the others thinking my day was going badly wrong. I then caught sight of Crispin maintaining height on a low hill on the edge of the

we got to the top of the climb I headed back on to the big ridge, whilst David headed forward to get to launch where his car was.

I joined Bob in a huge rocky bowl and found Crispin slowly climbing up the cliffs. Up here the North wind was having more effect so climbs were being ripped over the back far too quickly. Bob headed



PHOTO BY MARCUS KING

Bob was off first and headed away from take off followed by Rachael. Meanwhile Sophie, David, Crispin, and myself managed to climb straight off launch before heading off after him. We headed to a wooded slope facing the valley breeze where we had varying degrees of success climbing out. I found myself with Sophie and Rachael drifting along a high ridge heading towards Bob, whilst David and Crispin struggled at the chair lift before going to a lower hill. The scenery was pretty awesome with steep rocky faces dropping down into the valleys below. You had to take care as there was a reasonable wind from

plateau that I was flying over so I headed towards him. On the way over I found David had landed trying to get to the same hill. I arrived on the hill and found it easy enough to stay up, but I needed a climb if I was going to get back to launch, which was my desired landing as the valley winds would be blowing hard by now. Crispin managed to find a climb and bravely took it straight over the valley behind with big cliffs.

David and I then found our own climb which took us over the plateau, giving us a better bail out option (not that we needed it from this 10 up solid climb). As

off, and I decided he must have a plan, so followed. What I didn't know, because my radio had gone down, was that Sophie had been blown into a different valley system and Bob had decided to go down to drive round and look for her. In the end we couldn't make it back up the valley because of the valley breeze and when he turned back and landed I turned back to a slope facing straight into the valley breeze thinking I would get back up. Strangely it didn't work and it wasn't long before I joined Bob in his landing field. We spoke to David who said Sophie had phoned to say she was safe and was hitching to Gap where she

would meet us. So we waited in a bar for the others to fetch us and Crispin to arrive. We were all pretty hyper when we met up, the scenery had been awesome and we babbled about it, but everyone wanted to do a proper XC in the area. Rachael and Sophie said they were pretty freaked by the sight of me flying in that terrain without a helmet, but to be honest I never worried about it.

The next day it wasn't hard to decide where to go; back to Orcierre to have a go at a route. This time I had a helmet, well a bicycle helmet borrowed from David and some proper gloves. First off, I decided not to hang around and headed straight to the wooded face but it wasn't giving off too much. I was able to maintain but was still on the ridge when the others came over. We spent quite a while slowly getting higher but never getting a proper climb. Bob came on the radio, said he was bored and that he was going to try the face at the back of the valley. It was a huge rocky south face with a cloud on the top, classic textbook stuff. I followed on the glide, with Sophie and Crispin close behind. Rachael was climbing back towards launch and David had gone down out in front. On the face the lift was weak "what the hell is going on we should be hoofing up?" and we worked it for an hour or more before we got to the top. Again Bob was off wandering, just as Sophie and I got a climb that took us a bit above the mountain. I radioed Bob to discuss the state of the clouds, some of which were showing signs of popping. He agreed with my call so we decided to can it. Off on a glide again this time back to launch where Sophie and I top landed by the 4-wheel drive just as David walked up to it. Bob landed by his van to go and retrieve Rachael who had landed out in the valley below our south face, and was enjoying a walk. The next day we decided to try Laragne itself. There was a

German HG competition on so we were keen to get off before their window. We all climbed out from the hill in solid 10+ ups and met up at base on the end of the ridge before the long glide to St Genis. Everybody made the glide, and as we were all on DHV1-2 or DHV1 gliders, it shows how performance has come on since the days when people dismissed Laragne as being suitable for PGs because of the long glides. We climbed again, but hopes of a good XC were quickly dashed by the sight of approaching rain and a large cloud. So it was back to Laragne, enjoying a photo session on the way, and of course a bit of glider throwing. That night it was the local village Fete, so we had to partake and were dancing well into the early hours of the morning. I still have memories of raving in an orchard at 3am in the morning.

The next day I awoke at 10am, not sure I would want to fly. After a pain au chocolate, a couple of coffees and a look at the sky, I just had to go flying. We dashed up to the site, which was a tad less busy as the competition had ended, and quickly got ready. Bob was first off and I followed straight into a climb which took us to base. We waited whilst Sophie climbed up to us, but Rachael had a harder time and eventually headed for the South landing. We made the glide to St Genis where we found a solid climb before heading to convergence cloud and an easy section. We were heading to Pic de Burre, Our initial plan was to try and get there and back to Laragne, which is about a 70km flight. Meanwhile David, who had decided not to fly, had picked up Rachael and she was now climbing out. She managed about 40km following behind us on a DHV1 Atom before she got cut off by the clouds. Bob and I reached the Pic de Burre reasonably high and were soon back at base, where we indulged in a photo session whilst waiting for Sophie to climb up to us. The

clouds to the west had been getting pretty big and there had been rain falling from them, but elsewhere there was nothing threatening. We decided we couldn't fly back so we might as well head onwards. By now I was dodging the clouds at base and was keen to move, so headed to a cloud in the valley behind, followed by the others. Typically, as we arrived the cloud dissipated so we headed to a nearby ridge. We came in and found only small bits of lift as it was in shade from our cloud. Bob decided it was time for a poo stop and landed, just as Sophie and I found a weak climb which strengthened and took us steadily back to base. Bob got back in the air and again found no climbs so dived to a sunny patch where a moonbeam took him up. We honed in on him and joined him above for the climb. Ahead was the large valley running from Grenoble to Gap and beyond the real mountains, the Ecrins. On the far side of the valley from us was the rocky end of a ridge facing the sun, it was an obvious place to go. "Please say we are going to go for it" I radioed, and Bob replied saying "sure thing, set the controls." So off we went, gliding on and on, "Put your hands up in the air, put your hands up in the air", a Fat Boy Slim inspired shout for joy came over the radio. I thought Bob was there but he just kept going and the cliff started to dwarf his glider, then I saw his shadow rushing up to join him, his wing tipped over and he was climbing. I came into the climb a bit above him and we raced back to base. There were some sailplanes about so I didn't want to go into the white stuff, and as soon as I was at base I headed to the next ridge to the North from where a line of clouds headed into the mountains. This was a much shorter glide and we were soon climbing again, now we had to commit to following the ridge into the mountains. There is no way I would have done this on my own, and Bob surprised me by saying afterwards that he didn't think he

would have either on his own. Strangely, surrounded by friends, it was easy to make the commitment, although pretty soon afterwards I did have doubts. It was textbook flying though; go to the big pointy thing facing the sun with cloud on top and you go up. I was now getting pretty cold as we had been flying at between 10 and 12 thousand feet asl for a while, and it was getting late and we were getting hungry.

The Ecrins mountains are full on, the most rugged I have seen apart from Nepal's high mountains, with very steep sided valleys most of which have no roads. It's real wilderness with glaciers and definitely not a place to go down. I was aware of how late it was, and I think Bob was, as he kept encouraging us to move on. Ahead loomed the mass of the Barre D'Ecrins the largest peak in the region at over 4000m. On the last ridge before it, Sophie was quite low and I lost a climb then got a large front tuck. It was weird though, I didn't get scared, I knew I had to get out so turned back in, got the climb called to Sophie and we were back on our way. We

charged to the W face of the Barre and soared it looking for a way over. From my memory I know this was on the far side of the Ecrins and a valley dropped to Ailfroide, but looking out it seemed the mountains just went on and on. It was gone 6pm and we were soaring the final snow slopes of a 4000m peak, what a magical situation. But I was tired and starting to worry about how much more of this we would have to do to reach safety. Sophie and I tried heading along one of the ridges, where we were given a saving climb. Bob quickly joined us and the three of us climbed out wing tip to wing tip, the emotions started to build, this was pretty fucking special. Then down on the left I could see a main road a way out and then the main valley came into view. The stress fell away and was replaced by complete joy. Time for the final glide; 15km to Briancon with the ground dropping all the way.

We dropped from the setting sun into the gloom of the valley to a landing field near the railway station. I felt in a state of shock when I landed, we all hugged and blabbered to each other, for Sophie and I it was our first

100+km flight and Bob said it was the best flight he had had in Europe. David soon turned up (it's great to have a retrieve following) and whisked us to a restaurant where we stuffed ourselves and got a little drunk, before heading home. Back in the office, I don't think I came down for a day or two. Rob and the boys bought a celebratory cake and set my next goal 160kms (100miles). I thought the flight might have satisfied me for a while, but I've already been looking at the maps looking at other possible routes. The distance wasn't that big a thing compared to the magical experience of flying through those mountains and sharing that experience with some great mates, something I'll never forget.

Thanks go to Bob Drury and Sophie Tudor my special partners for the day and David Owen and Rachael Evans for there great hospitality and the retrieve. We were all flying DHV1-2 gliders with Bob and I on Vibes and Sophie on a Serak. As Bob said "DHV1-2, The scenery just gets better." □

Do you have an Email Address?

If you have an email address you can help reduce the club's administrative costs by getting Nova and other club information sent to you by email. To set this up email the membership secretary at:

membership@avonhgpg.co.uk

IF you move don't forget to advise of any changes to your email address or any other personal details.

One Winter's Day

A true story by Ken Wilkinson with introduction by Geoff Rodgers

It was nice to meet up with old friends at the Mere bash again this year, particularly Ken Wilkinson whom I had not seen for years. Many of you will know Ken as being a newly qualified PG pilot. In fact Ken is an old HG pilot who in 1989 was chairman of our club and a very keen competition pilot and wacky backy pioneer. Meeting up with Ken again brought back memories of flying days we enjoyed together. Whilst clearing out the potting shed the other day, I came across an old Avon magazine (amongst the mucky ones), dated February 1989. In it is Ken's account of a wind up Dereck and myself played on him during a days flying we had at Draycott. It takes some believing but it is all true. At the time Ken was an explosive expert, and we felt if brains were dynamite then Ken would not have had enough to blow his hat off. Hope you enjoy reading this article as much as I did after all these years.

Geoff

Just after Christmas, I went out to Draycott, as for once the weather actually looked reasonable, with a fairly unstable southwesterly flow. I got there about oneish, and with the reality of a winter flight staring me bleakly in the face my enthusiasm became some what muted. Rather than striding to the front of the hill, kit in hand I elected to just take a look leaving my kite, but carrying my flying bag across.

The weather had deteriorated since the morning, and with the wind fairly light, the possibility of going down was quite high. My enthusiasm was definitely receding, especially as I was alone. Turning to leave, I saw Dereck Target, and Geoff Rodgers arriving, full of enthusiasm. Apparently they'd just flown down to Weston, with Geoff getting 3000 ft ATO! They were back up for another go, and had Simon White's "Ace" with them, which they offered to me to save me the trouble of getting mine from the now distant van. This seemed a good idea, as the end of the day was fast approaching. 3000 ft in December, wow! I could use some of that!

I rigged quickly (come to think of it, I can't remember a time I haven't rigged quickly), pleased to see Simon used a Pitchy, so my hang straps wouldn't need adjusting. He also had bar mitts - luxury! - same as me too. I took off and floated around for half an hour or so, pleased to get a try on another Ace. It seemed to go quite nicely. Pity about the height gain though; the morning may have given 3000 ft, but I was lucky to be getting 300ft in the afternoon. Still, can't complain in the winter.

I came into land, just behind the wall, and, in spite of the smooth conditions, didn't get 'it' right, and finished up on my nose. I thought I may have slightly bent an upright. Rats, loads of extra trouble for a moments incompetence. I carried the glider forward, to see Hamster Haycraft in conversation with Dereck, laughing. As I drew level to them, I offered seasons greetings to Mark, and looked around at my distant van.

Shock! ! my gliders not there! Some bastard's had it. I wasn't 100% sure, at that distance, and checked with Dereck. "My eyes aren't what they used to be" he said, curiously having difficulty keeping a straight face in what to me seemed a serious situation. Mark was pissing himself with laughter, a most inappropriate pose, I thought. Then they told me the truth, which may have become obvious, namely that they had given me my own glider, picking it up from my van as they drove in the field! All the stories about-3000ft ATO, and trips to Weston were revealed to be as truthful as the statement of ownership of the glider.

All this goes to prove that there's no fool like an old fool. I am getting fairly old.

'Clockwork' Ken Wilkinson
(Easily wound up)

FLY AWAY → the first in a series of club members guides to specialist flying holidays and resorts

The Last Resort, France

By Richard Danbury

I spent a week in early September at The Last Resort in the Haute Savoie, France. This is not an article about the flying in the Haute Savoie; there have been many such articles in Skywings and other magazines. This article is intended as a guide to what you can expect from a stay at the Last Resort, and the practicalities involved.

The Last Resort is a chalet in the village of St. Jean de Sixt, five minutes drive from the ski resorts of Grand Bornand and La Clusaz, and about 20 minutes from Annecy. The chalet is large and is organised as a mixture of self-contained apartments, and twin, double and family rooms, some with en-suite bathrooms. The layout is quite flexible, so they can probably cater for groups of most descriptions. The chalet is run by Al and Ali, who are both paraglider pilots. Al does fly guiding and coaching, and other coaches are brought in for specific weeks as necessary. Ali looks after the catering and domestic side of things.

The operation caters for all levels of pilots. During some weeks straightforward fly-guiding is offered. Other weeks of the year are dedicated to various courses. For low-airtime pilots new to mountain flying there is the Introduction to Mountain Flying. The Mountain Flying and Thermalling course is for those with a little more experience who want to start XC flying. Experienced pilots are catered for by the Alpine XC course, in which pilots are coached on XC flights by guides in the air. Advanced XC pilots can take an XC course with Bob Drury. The Last Resort can also arrange courses for novices with the Passagers du Vent, based in Annecy.

Weeks run Saturday to Saturday. Arrangements couldn't be simpler: just get yourself a flight to Geneva airport on a Saturday, and The Last Resort will pick you up and take you to the chalet, which is about an hour's drive away. They like to pick up as many people as they can in one trip so you may have to wait a while at the airport. But 3 or 4 trips to Geneva on a Saturday seems to be the norm, so you won't have to wait long. When I went, one of the group had wisely arranged an early flight to Geneva, and he asked to be dropped at Grand Bornand rather than going straight to the chalet so he managed a flight on arrival day. He had also arranged his return flight to be quite late

on the following Saturday, so he was able to get in a flight on departure day too.

Remember that you'll be arriving at Geneva in Switzerland. If you want to get some Euros at the airport, you'll find that you have to get Swiss francs from the machine and then change them to Euros at the bureau de change so you'll incur charges twice. Also, when you depart from Geneva you'll find that the shops and bar at the airport are very happy to take Euros, but they only give change in Swiss francs. Unless you're very on-the-ball, this gives them much scope to rip you off. My advice is to avoid spending money at the airport at all!

Once you're at the chalet, pretty much everything is laid on. Breakfast and the four-course evening meal (with wine) are provided in the large and comfortable sitting/dining room. A packed lunch is also provided. Vegetarians and other fussy eaters are catered for with no problem - I was there with someone who didn't eat vegetables! There's also a self-service bar - just make a note of what you take. Outside there are hammocks and chairs to lounge in, and a table tennis table if you're still feeling energetic after flying. For non-flyers there is plenty of good walking to do (with good access by the ski lifts), and other activities such as mountain biking etc. (There are a couple of mountain bikes you can borrow). If it's not flyable, a trip to Annecy is worthwhile, and Al and Ali will arrange someone to drive you there. Annecy is a picturesque place with an old town and 16th-century fortress, and you can spend a pleasant half-day wandering around sampling the cafés and restaurants. There is also a museum of the Resistance, the nearby Glières plateau having been a stronghold of the Resistance in 1944.

There's a cash machine in St. Jean de Sixt, but you'll be hard pushed to spend much money while you're there, you just need some to cover the odd lift pass and one evening meal at a restaurant when the staff have their weekly night off. You'll also need to settle your bar bill (preferably with cash) at the end. Talking of going out, St. Jean de Sixt isn't exactly the most lively place, but it has a couple of restaurants and bars, and a few shops. Being a ski resort, La Clusaz is larger and looks as if it would have some night-life, and it's just a short bus/taxi ride away. But after a

day's flying, and a large evening meal at the chalet, most people will be very happy to collapse in the comfortable sofas in the evening.

For those pilots looking for thermals the start of the day is very relaxed – breakfast (and weather briefing) is at 9.00, and then there's time to write postcards and dangle in your harness from the balcony until 11.00, when everyone piles into the mini-bus or 4x4 to go to whatever site looks best that day. I imagine that an earlier start might be necessary for lower-airtime pilots.

Access to all the launches is easy. Lachat de Chatillion, overlooking Grand Bornand, has a brand new chair lift that takes you straight to launch. A bus picks you up from the landing field in Grand Bornand and takes you about 10 minutes up the hill to the chair lift. (Note that the chair lift only runs on Sundays after the end of August though). Another launch is Cret du Loup on the Aravis ridge overlooking La Clusaz, which is reached by driving up by 4x4. We also flew from Montmin and Plan Fait at Lake Annecy, both of which are an easy drive up, and both of which have carpeted

launches. The Chamonix valley is also within reach, but there's little point in going there as there is good flying closer at hand.

A 2m radio is pretty useful (and essential for XC courses), and AI can hire you one if you don't have one. For XC hounds, the map to use is the French Institute Geographique National no. 45 "Annecy Lausanne" 1cm/1km. The chalet has one of those plastic 3D relief maps, so you can get a good idea of the terrain even before you take to the air. When flying, the terrain is impressive, but the valleys are wide and grassy and none is remote, so landing out is no problem.

The Last Resort is far from cheap, but they make your stay very comfortable and hassle-free. Once you're there you have nothing to think about except your flying.

Contact: www.lastresorthols.co.uk, email info@lastresorthols.co.uk, or call free from the UK on 0800 652 3977.

Maison Du Moulin, Annecy

By Dean Naylor

Having a very tight budget, I was not expecting to fly abroad this year. I had only qualified in March and with only 15 hrs under my belt I was happy to plod on, flying whenever I could in SE Wales and the occasional day at Selsey and Frocester. After a miserable summer, a fellow flying buddy was in a similar situation to my self and came up with a plan to go abroad for a long weekend. We needed to find somewhere that was easy to get to, had some quality flying and was above all affordable.

We plumbed for long weekend at Maison Du Moulin, situated on the shores of lake Annecy, as the cost for a B&B/guiding package is extremely reasonable. Our host, Irwin, may be known to some Avon pilots; his flying CV is impressive having competed at the highest levels and is an ACPUL test pilot. His attitude whilst we were there was right on the mark, he considered himself to be a flying companion and not a guide. Whilst he was more than willing to pass his advice and share his vast local knowledge, he did not dictate to our group the agenda for the weekend which helped make for an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere.

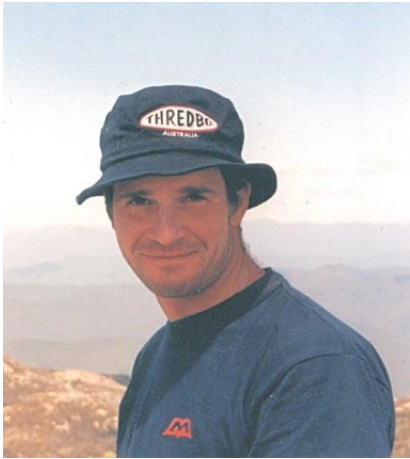
During our stay we managed to fly every day getting at least 2 flights each day. As low airtime pilots the advice we received was invaluable, I couldn't believe how different flying in the mountains could be. Having to forward launch from the Col De Forclaz take off, and with a British soaring mentality, I was only
Nova November 2002

expecting a top to bottom. But on that flight I got 5 separate climbs to base! One of our group managed his first real XC doing a 36 Km around the lake under the constant supervision of Irwin, whilst I was quite happy to land in the field adjacent to Irwin's house for a cool beer.

Annecy is fantastically PG friendly place, and the only down side to the trip was that it showed just how bad we have back home, ignorance is definitely bliss. I'm sure all three of us will be returning to in the Spring for a longer trip this time, if you're low airtime and on a budget I can definitely recommend Maison du Moulin.

Breakdown of Costs: Flight Luton – Geneva £90 Rtn; B&B 3 nights £50; Guiding £90; Car £50 (between 3). www.maison-du-moulin.co.uk or contact Dean on: 07977 918691 dean.naylor@axa-sharedservices.co.uk.

Pilot Profile



Alex Coltman

Full Name?

Alexander Michael McAlester Coltman

Home?

Bristol

Occupation?

Scumbag student (Actually working very hard!)

Aircraft Flown?

Paragliders, hang gliders and model gliders

How long have you been flying?

About 8 years on Paragliders and 2 on Hang gliders

Rating?

AP Paragliders and CP hang gliders

Where do you usually fly?

Mostly in S E Wales or Avon sites. Favorite site for the scenery would be Hay Bluff / Pandy (if you haven't flown these sites you are missing out) and for reliable XC flying Merthyr Common or Olivers Castle.

What was your best flight?

Way too many amazing experiences to just pick one but

here's a few highlights: Full on combat flying in St Andre with climbs to 13grand at stupid climb rates. The first time I did the Milk run from Hay Bluff via Talgarth to Crickhowell, gorgeous views and nice flying. Thermaling tip to tip with Rich Harding while we climbed up through a super thick inversion at Talybont. Flying XC with Jo in Australia, it's amazing how difficult it is to justify where you think a thermal will be. We did 40km together but Jo missed the next thermal.

What was your worst flight?

My worst flight was on the Bloreng; I had a large asymmetric deflation and stalled the rest of the wing, leading to a bounce, some broken bones and five days on Neville hall. My worst moments while involved in flying have been when I hear about other people having bad accidents. There have been a few recently and it makes you wonder, but flying has changed my life in such a positive way all I can hope is that these people felt the same.

What was your luckiest escape?

St Andre again, landing in a river bed behind a constriction in the valley. Big asymmetric followed by a turn over trees and a V fast landing onto big boulders. The worst thing is I landed because I was desperate for a pee!!

Who has most influenced you in the sport?

When I had just started, Ron Smith and Bertie Grotian were a big help, always on the hill and full of good advice. Once I started to go XC Simon Kerr, Tim Pentreath and Marcus King became my flying buddies. Simon took me to S E Wales for the first time and introduced me to the delights of the Airwave Challenge. Now I seem to end up on the hill with Rich Harding, Pete Taylor, Gary Mitchell and some S E Wales members, amongst others, all trying to go far.

What would be your best advice for a new pilot?

- 1) Don't move up to a wizzy wing too soon.
- 2) EVERYONE in the sport is approachable; don't be afraid to ask for help/advice.
- 3) When flying try and work out why things are happening, where is that thermal coming from, why is it rough here, etc
- 4) Read Dennis Pagen's Performance flying.

What would be the perfect end to a perfect flying day?

Landing on the coast knowing my decisions have all been good. Then watching Jo and all my friends landing just a couple of fields short! A nice easy retrieve and a few tinnies round a fire at Llangatock.

What do you do if its not flyable?

Moan about the weather, stay in bed till the afternoon.

What's your Favorite Pilots Picnic?

Ice Cream or cheese and leek sandwiches from Raglan

Which famous person in history would you choose to have been?

Biggles!

Who/what makes you laugh?

Hang glider pilots and The Simpsons (only joking about the Simpsons!)

What's your greatest fear?

Losing my eyesight

What's your biggest regret?

Not starting to fly when I was younger.

What's your motto? Don't do today what can be put off till tomorrow.

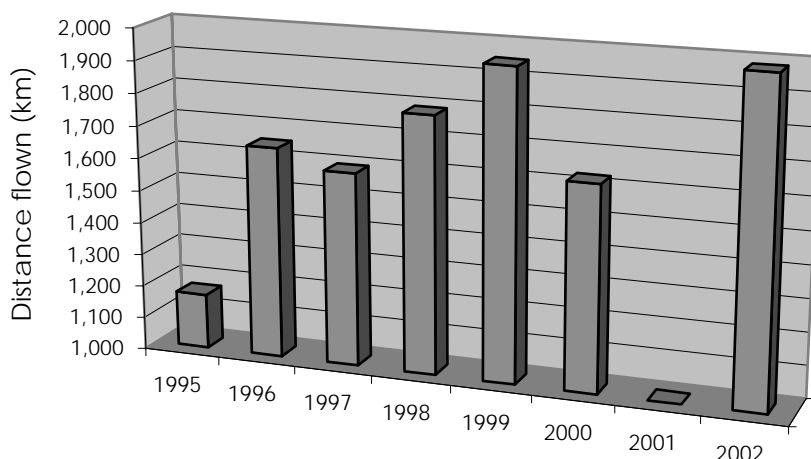
2002 PG XC League - The final analysis...

www.avonpgxc.co.uk

After a fabulous September and early October the flying season has been abruptly terminated with the onset of autumnal wind and rain - still, on the plus side it gives me a break from running this website I suppose!

As a club it's been our best ever XC year with 1983km flown by 22 pilots in 91 flights, averaging 21.8km per flight. This coming after the disasterous year last year was a real bonus! However I don't think it's been an easy year for XC flying, hence only 91 flights entered compared to 104 in 1999 and 117 in 1998. The fact that there were 7 flights over 50km this year compared to 5 in 2000 and just 3 in 1999 and 1998 has obviously pushed up the average. However we have had the most pilots and new pilots (eight) since 1998, so that's encouraging.

Distances flown 1995-2002



For the second year running Jim Mallinson is in the top position with 282km flown in his top 6 flights and 333km in total, including a 75km flight from Coombe Gibbett and two others over 50km. Well done Jim, thoroughly deserved again!

Snapping at his heels for the whole season has been Rich Harding who has had a fantastic year - 264km in his top 6 flights and 465km overall, including the longest flight of the year, 83km from Olivers. And all this on a glider that seems to want to fold itself up and get back into it's bag in mid-air :-). Congratulations Rich on a storming year!

In 3rd place this year is Alex Coltman with 210km from his top 6 flights and 227km overall, including a gutsy 51km from Coward's Bowl and an amazing 48km flight in the Bleriot Cup which almost won the day... This is Alex's third year in the top three, but the top spot is still eluding him - maybe next year!

As I've already mentioned the longest flight of the year goes to Rich with his fantastic 83km flight from Olivers on 24th June - do read his account of the flight if you haven't done so already by clicking on the link...

Tom Mayne takes the prize for the longest flight on a DHV 1/2 glider with a 40km flight from Leckhampton on 26th March on his Nova Carbon. This sounded like a great flight, not even spoilt by a dog peeing on his glider after he'd landed! Tom maintains that the south coast has got to be achievable from Leckhampton - now that would be an awesome flight!

Best newcomer goes to Martin Stanton who finished in 6th place with 101km, including a fantastic 69km from Combe Gibbet which I think I'm right in saying was only his second UK XC! I wonder what next year will hold in store...?

This year the award for most improved pilot goes to Jo Eades who not only finished in 10th place with a creditable 47km, but managed to finish 6th overall and top woman in the British Paragliding Cup and as such has earned herself a place in the British Paragliding Championships next year. Congratulations on an excellent year Jo!

Finally, the Easter XC Cup was won by Dave Yeandle with a small but significant flight from Mere to Long Knoll. Tragically Dave was killed just a few days later whilst on a paragliding holiday in Spain and with this in mind we will be changing the name of the Easter Cup to the "Dave Yeandle Cup" in his memory.

I think Cath Hutchinson summed up the thrill of XC flying perfectly when describing her first XC flight to me - "it was both scary and exhilarating, an emotional experience that I shan't ever forget". Congratulations to everyone who entered a flight into the pg XC league this year, long or short. Keep the memories of those flights in your head over the winter, and before you know it spring will be here again - don't forget that the first flights this year were entered on 2nd March.

All that remains is to thank our sponsors, Nick Mallabar (System X), Gavin Foster (Advance), the boys at Ozone and last but not least Marcus King, for their support this year - their prizes add greatly to the competition and make it definitely worth going for!

Tim Pentreath

The Avon XC Files

24/06/02 - Rich Harding, 83.5km from Olivers

A Kid Swinging On Heaven's Gate

"Today, I saw music in the sky", I exclaimed to myself as I peered out of the window at 9am on Monday. Conditions looked great, the PC went on, Anoraknophobia went in the CD player and, as Alex's call came through, Mr Hogarth crooned with him in unison the immortal words "Are you coming out to play? Could be quite a day".

Half an hour later the sky was developing nicely and we were driving towards Oliver's Castle in the Polo, hoping we were correct in thinking the wind was lighter as we went east, having spent a frustrating, blown out day on the site last Tuesday.

When we arrived the wind was blowing a perfect 10 and there was no-one else in sight. Huh? Then a blue Sport appeared from low on the ridge and climbed above us. Alex soon joined him, radioing me to hurry up, but I was determined to finally sort my new harness' geometry - I'd measured my hangpoint separation on my old Woody Valley against the glider bag so I could mark it off on my new Apco. I took off but couldn't get into the thermal they were in, so had to scratch around for ten minutes, during which time Alex rejoined me - I told him on radio I hoped he hadn't come back for me.

The next cycle soon came through and we were away, as two more pilots carried bundled gliders back to the

front. This climb was not at all sorted low over the back and Alex appeared to be turning back, a couple of hundred feet below me, until I found a decent part, called it and he flew underneath. He then returned the favour, finding a better core when I lost that one and, as we crossed the Marlborough road, we were dead level in a consistent seven-up, turning tight right-handers around each other. After a couple of minutes I ignored a slightly too big tip tuck and lost half my canopy but I managed to catch him back up.

As we passed north of Milk Hill, Alex decided that it was time to glide off downwind, and I asked if he wanted me to stay with the weak 1-up/1-down we were now in or follow. It soon became irrelevant as the cloud disintegrated very fast, so I floated off towards Alex, who was in another unsorted climb west of Marlborough. Halfway to him, I found another weak climb, just as his disintegrated, and eeked it out as he was forced down to Marlborough. Alex is an absolute star, as I said to him on the radio at the time; as he was standing in his landing field cursing, he saw two birds starting to thermal out above him and called me over on the radio. Less than ten minutes later I was at base (4500 at this point) for the first time on the day, over Ramsbury.

In my mid-teens I lived in Culham, near Abingdon and now I could see Didcot power station away to the north-east. Having never been over the back of Oliver's before, this was the first time I knew where I was; better still, with all the airspace I was about to encounter, for the rest of the flight I was never going to be in the slightest doubt of precisely where I was on the airmap. Even better, I could mentally add back in the contours that are lost from on high. I crossed the M4 on a glide, between Membury Services and Junction 14.

I caught a weakish but sorted thermal over Woodlands St Mary whilst I eye-balled Harwell UKAEA and its associated Protection Zone. Continuing my track east towards the A34 I got a boomer just south of Chaddleworth that took me back to base, briefly accompanied by three sailplanes that ran underneath me, all from different directions.

Eventually I glided off towards Hampstead Norreys, where the LTMA kicks in at 4500. As base was now close to five grand this meant no more playing with the chilly bits under the fluffy white things. I'd now worked out the day's thermals to the extent that I could map them with the minimum of information - and as Alex had said on the climb out, it was a day for predictive flying. As the cycles were short enough that if you went for a cloud that was already developed it was decaying when you arrived.

For some reason then I chose to fly towards a cloud over Pangbourne - it was the most vertically developed, clean-shaped cloud in the sky and, needless to say, it wasn't working any more when I arrived. Divvy! I was back to ground sources and landing options. Just to the SSW of the town (i.e. directly upwind), a chap with a tractor of sorts was cutting a grass field with a six-lane athletics track marked out. Thanks, mate - you're a bloody star! I stayed in the outside of this one, turning lazy 360s, giggling...

...and at a little over 3000 feet (the base of the LTMA being 3500 here) I glided off towards Sonning Common, working little bits and trying to spot my childhood best friend's house below. I headed for the dual carriageway out of Henley to Nettlebed and its junction with the Watlington road, marking the edge of where the LTMA descends to 2500, considered landing by the Thames but could see loads of marquees - glad I didn't - the Regatta was on and I'd have breached the 'large gathering' rules. I remembered that Adrian Thomas had made Nettlebed a couple of years ago for a little over 70km. I was chuffed to bits.

I caught another climb over the road and headed over Stonor House. It petered out but I had a 3500 ceiling still so I aimed between Stokenchurch and Wycombe Air Park's ATZ. I think I should have tried to stay with it - from then on all I caught were snotty bubbles of lift and it was dubious I'd get across the M40 so I picked a small ridge to try for a final save.

I cautioned myself not to wreck it all now - I'd been in the air for four hours and was mentally exhausted. The ridge didn't work and I was rotored behind some trees on pre-finals just as I tried to bar forward; the glider collapsed massively and turned downwind in a second; I cried "Oh, no", seriously scared. As I was being turned I was way too low to throw the bag; I had to sort it out; the glider dived and collapsed, I caught it, stabilised it, turned back upwind; five

seconds later I landed; the shakes quickly evaporated and turned to sheer elation.

I packed up (badly) and walked back down the road to find a landing witness. Then I checked bus times and directions, and repacked my bag to avoid a visit to the chiropractor. I spoke to Alex who was now on Milk, having got back to Oliver's and had a second go. I called a local friend to try to cadge a lift, thumbed into High Wycombe, straight to the bus station, ran to Bay N for the Reading bus, had a pint at Reading Station and caught the train back to Temple Meads - the flight took four hours exactly; the retrieve spot on five!

Walked back up to the house on the cliff...pressed play...

"...Today I saw music in the sky It sang around me, I went blind Like a masterpiece in a disguise Couldn't stop it pulling at my eyes"

If my heart were a ball it would roll uphill.

Rich Harding

11/05/02 - Alex Coltman, 48.7km from Fforest Fields

I had a great last day of the Bleriot Cup having arrived on a blown out Fforest Farm not even expecting a task. The wind died to almost nothing and a window was set for 1:30pm before someone spotted a sea breeze inland. It was decided to hold the window back to see what happened to the wind when the front it arrived.

Our goal was Castle Meadows in Abergavenny, and the window was opened at 2:05pm. Everyone moved along the hill to get as close to the sea breeze as possible and, sure enough, the wind picked up to a soarable level and people started climbing in small weak cores. It was hard work to stay with the thermals as they wandered about, very unorganised, but things got better as we approached base at around 5200ft. We were about 500 ft above the clouds to our east but below clouds to our west, the ground downwind was all in shade so the majority of the comp pilots just drifted back towards Hay Bluff with the front.

As soon as a glide was possible everyone went on a glide towards lord Herefords Knob. Most arrived high but some were dropped here as they arrived very low on the hill. Those of us who were more lucky flew straight to a thermal marked by two sailplanes and three hang-gliders. This climb was good but was drifting us back into the Brecon Beacons where the ground was very dark. I left the climb taking two Frenchmen and Ans Khan with me and we started to race properly as we shot off towards the next climb at

the Talgarth gliding club, again the climb was marked by sailplanes. Our whole gaggle climbed up the inside of their thermal and left for the ridge running towards Crickhowell.

This was easy and fast with no need to take climbs until the last bowl that faces WNW. Unfortunately the bowl wasn't working well and we needed a good climb to get back to Abergavenny. I'd heard about a convergence line that was supposed to set up here, so took a glide away from the hill looking for something. After a good search I swore at the person who I thought had lied to me and returned to the ridge. I was now on the shallow part of the ridge and loosing about 40 feet with every beat, I had blown it and the French were still soaring the bowl! In my desperation I noticed that there was a line of wispy looking clouds going straight towards Abergavenny and as I had no choice I flew round the corner and started a "glide of hope!"

It worked! There were climbs where there shouldn't have been, small and slow but drifting in the right direction (I heard them described as Fizzy drink climbs, just small bubbles but lots of them). As soon as I started to climb the French and Ans left the hill and joined me. Ans found the climb with a French ace; Jean-Michel (Boomerang) and started climbing slowly beneath me, but we had succeeded in dropping the number one French pilot, Max (flying Planet Proto) who went off looking for a "proper climb" and landed. We topped up our climb to about 1500 ft and I thought I could make it from there. The plan was to take a really necky glide, if it worked I would win the day!! If not then hopefully Jean-Michel would also land short and Ans would win the day.

The glide was very buoyant which made the final glide very fast. Unfortunately for the Brits the French Boomerang was much faster than my Whisper and he beat me into goal by about 5 seconds! Ans was about 4 seconds behind me and we thought we may have the Bleriot won. However, after about 15 minutes two more French pilots got in and the game was over. Tim Guildford and Laurent, another French pilot, made goal after a struggle through the Beacons but it was over for the Brits for another year!

In the goalfield everyone was smiles, French and British alike, everyone had had a great last day and seen some of Britain's best views. It's a shame to lose the Bleriot cup but it couldn't have been won by a nicer bunch of people.

Take Off: Fforest farm SO 088 526
Turnpoint 1: SO 208 409
Turnpoint 2: SO 188 230
Landing Castle Meadows SO 293 139
Flight duration: 2hr 15 min
Glider: Flying Planet Whisper.

Alex Coltman

Nova November 2002

26/03/02 - Tom Mayne, 39.9km from Leckhampton

Weatherjack gave a 4 for the day, and in the morning it looked quite nice, light winds and a few cumulus about, so I decided to take the afternoon off. First decision was which site, the wind being NE it was going to be either a bit off at the Malverns, or a bit off at Leckhampton. I decided to have a look at Leckhampton first as it's ten minutes from my house.

The wind was a bit off, but coming back on during the cycles. In the air it was quite rough, strongish broken thermals, nice to be on the stress free Carbon. After a while of not really getting anything to tempt me away from the hill, I ventured round the corner to the east where there is a second smaller face, which was a bit more into wind. There, I quickly found a really good thermal and climbed 2000ft in 5 minutes. At this point I was still on the hill really, as the drift was very slow. The climb slowed down, and after 15 minutes of climbing it finally stopped at 3700ft ASL. I was less than 2km away from the hill, and not feeling terribly positive about the prospects for a decent XC.

Time to cover some ground, so off I glided towards a promising looking cloud. Finding some broken lift underneath, I looked up to see that the cloud was clearly dying. Since I was climbing a bit I stuck around and was rewarded with another decent climb, which again ended in frustrating zeros and very slow progress, and still less than 10 km. No clouds anywhere now, so I glided through moderate sink towards Painswick, hoping to get a climb on the downwind edge. I got a bit nervous whilst I was upwind of the village, as I was a little unsure of making it past. However I reached the far side with about 500ft left, and luckily there was a thermal, but it was a bit broken and difficult so I had to work quite hard to get established. I could now see the take off at Haresfield off to the west, Selsley ahead and the distinctive profile of Frocester in the distance. This climb got me to 3400ft, and again zeroed out.

I was now just upwind of Stroud with Selsley in easy reach, I was bound to get a thermal somewhere so familiar. So off I went keen to cover some ground, my luck held, and I found a thermal well before reaching Selsley. This was a good one, and it took me to a very cold 4300ft, the high point of the flight. I was now definitely at or just above the inversion, there was a very stark line between the hazy air below, and the crystal clear air above, the sky was much bluer, and in the far distance to the North I could see cumulus poking out above the inversion.

When this climb stopped there was clearly no point hanging around, so I took a few pictures and glided off over the gliding club, and into yet another thermal over Nympsfield, this one was a bit weak, so just a

little top-up really. Off again... aiming for Wotton-under-Edge now, hoping to get something on the ridge south of Uley. Nothing there, I clearly wasn't going to make Wotton', so I selected a nice big field to land in. I reached the field with 500ft to spare, which seemed a bit early to give up! There was the option of another field slightly further away, smaller, long and narrow, and next to a sun facing wooded ridge. So at 300ft above the ground I started setting up my approach to land, flying downwind over the ridge, and up we go, low save time again, up to 3500ft this time.

From here it was just a glide to the ground really, landed by a road a little way north of Yate, did my usual paranoid out landing final approach in the PLF position, which was good really as I hit some sink at

50ft and landed with a crunch. A dog came over and pissed on my glider, but I didn't care.

My first XC from Leckhampton, but probably not my last, excellent terrain down wind, with masses of trigger points etc. The south coast has got to be possible (I can dream can't I).

Launch: Leckhampton Hill (SO 958 185)
Landing: Wickwar (ST 725 861)
Flight duration: 1 hour 55 mins (take off at about 13:50)
Flight distance: 39.9 km
Glider: Nova Carbon

Tom Mayne

Dear HG pilot,

I've just had a read of the draft issue of the next Nova and it pains me to say that it is rapidly becoming a PG mag. (A well written one though!) Also, there is a lot of emphasis on bags of washing getting blown downwind for a few kms and seemingly little to report from us lot.

I guess that one of the reasons is that the PG pilots are relatively new to the sport and are more keen to rave about their achievements than pilots that have been flying for many years. I know most of you are modest unassuming types, but please, if you have anything interesting to report send it in.



Ron at Westbury - August 2002 by Peter Corcoran

On the XC side of things I expect next year will see some more action, I get the feeling that the interest in HG XC flying is growing in our club and it would be great if we all entered our flights into the club league. Not for glory, as that's not why we do it, but to try and encourage others. However, on the glory side we reached 5th place (out of 27) this year in the national league and weren't that far off 3rd or even 2nd place. The more of us that get together the easier the retrieves will get and most importantly the more FUN we will have.

Tony Moore

airtopia

SOUTH AFRICA 2003

**Next years big trip, two weeks in the Wilderness area. Coastal and inland thermic flying. February 8th-22nd 2003
Suitable for low-airtime pilots or xc hounds alike.**

Demo gliders from Airwave, Gin, Edel and Ozone.

Try before you buy...

Previously enjoyed Gliders

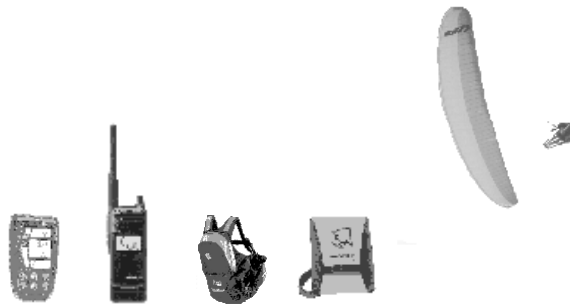
Airwave Magic	M	80-100kg very fab	1500:00
Gradient Onyx	L	90-110kg ex demo	1300:00
Advance Epsilon 1	S	50-65kg fair	300:00
Trekking Dynasty	L	95-110kg as new!	750:00

Call Robin on

01453 827202 office
0973 844449 mobile

Email: robin@airtopia.com
Fax 0870 0567204

ParAvion Ltd



ParAvion Ltd is delighted to be associated with the Avon Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club.

Fitz and the team would like to thank all members for their encouragement and support both moral and commercial.

The Shop is being stocked up for the new season and we would remind all members that we can quickly procure virtually anything that you could possibly need for hang gliding and/or paragliding.



AdPhone, fax, e-mail or visit us

Tel - 01672 861380

Fax - 01672 861580

e-mail - fitz@par-avion.co.uk

We are UK importers of UP, Brauniger. Main dealers for most gliders and accessories.



Caption Competition

Thank you to everyone who took part in the last caption competition. First prize goes to Phil Jolly who will receive a bottle of bubbly kindly donated by Par-Avion. To avoid stagnation setting in there will not be a photo this time round, however if you have any good ones for future editions please send them to:

Caption Competition, Nova Magazine, 112 Prestbury Drive, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9LE. email: nova@avonhgpg.co.uk.

"They say that pigs can't fly. Just wait till I get my new super huge tandem connected to Daisy here." **Richard Hellen**

'Even though the BHPA school inspection team were getting even better at disguises the back end was a give away.' **Robin**

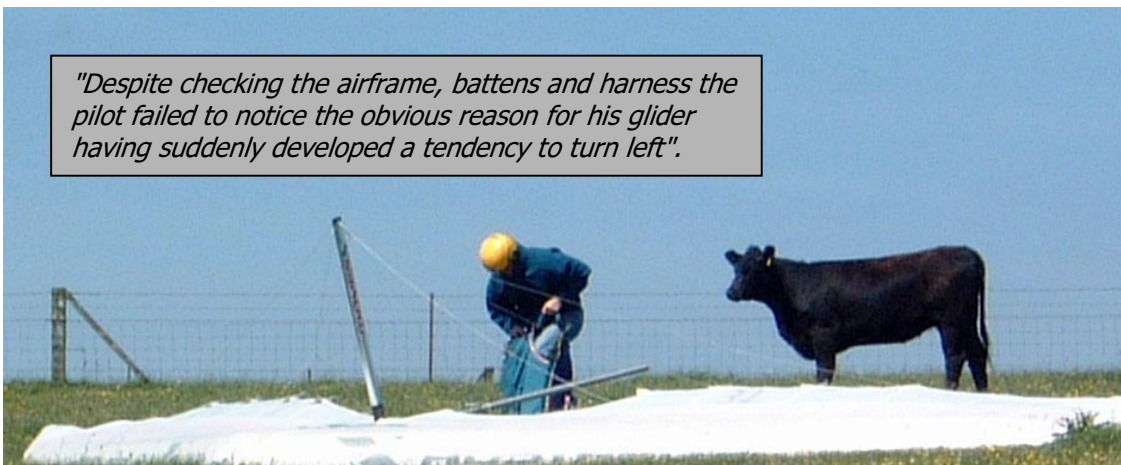
It's people like this who have caused the massive increase in tandem flight insurance! **Richard Beckett**

"Determined to get close enough to discover the secret of Tony Moore's XC success, John Jones persuaded Barb to join him in an absurd disguise". **Phil Jolly**

*"I only left it for a minute and this bloody cows gone and c**pped all over it".* **Gordon Johns**

Hangie: 'Hello cow, you stay there and be a good girl..and no eating my glider when I'm not looking, you naughty beastly you' Cow: 'moo'. **Penny Robinson**

"Despite checking the airframe, battens and harness the pilot failed to notice the obvious reason for his glider having suddenly developed a tendency to turn left".



**Do you want to be more in touch with what's happening in the club?
Are you on the internet?
If so, then join the avonhgpg smartgroup**

Members that are connected to the internet are reminded that the club has its own smartgroup which enables members to communicate with each other.

To register at www.smartgroups.com/groups/avonhgpg

NOVA The Newsletter of the Avon Hang-gliding and Paragliding Club – www.avonhgpg.co.uk

If Undelivered please return to: The Membership Secretary, Avon HG&PG Club, c/o 22 New Road, Durrington, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 8EL